

Oral History- Frances Grimm Little 02/15/1996

Frances Grimm Little: Where do you want me to begin?

EM: Let's see, where did your family live before they went to Alaska?

FL: My father was born in San Francisco in 1864.

EM: Wow

FL: My mother was born in Lynchburg, Tennessee in 1872

EM: What was your father's name?

FL: Frank J. Grimm

EM: And yours mother's name was?

FL: Her maiden name was Hess. Frances Hess.

EM: So you were named Augusta Frances?

FL: Yeah because of my aunts of my fathers.

EM: So you switched it around? And you used Frances.

FL: See I have a sister, see my mother was married before.

EM: Oh okay.

FL: They were from that union. My sister was the one that was older. She was the one that took Sebastopol by storm.

EM: What was her name?

FL: Hessel Murray. She looked Irish too. Her father was, Jim Murray. And had a brother Albert Murray. He lived in Alaska, I only saw him two or three times in my life. He was up there with mining interest and things like that.

EM: Was he a lot older than you?

FL: Oh, about I she was twenty years older than I. He was, I don't know if he was a year older or a year younger but they were close. But I was close to her, because she wanted me to call her momma, and she wanted me to call my mother auntie.

EM: She was older enough to be your mother almost?

FL: Yes, she was. And umm..if you liked to see pictures I can show you all of those pictures.

EM: Sure let's look at those later. Your family went to Alaska to do mining?

FL: My mother went to Alaska with her first husband. They lived up in southeastern Alaska and went into ... Nome, and teller the little place above there. And then my mother divorced him and then in 1906 she married my father. He had been in to Alaska since 1894.

EM: Did they get married in Alaska?

FL: No, they didn't.

EM: They were living there, and you were about five years old and a tide wave came along, in 1913.

FL: Yes, it came in 1913.

EM: It wiped out your house and everything.

FL: We didn't even have a home. Just flat. And we came out there. My father lived back in. If you look at the papers, the paper in Santa Rosa. You would see all that, because the paper had big headlines, "Frank Grimm died abroad a boat." And all about my mother going to Alaska I mean going Seattle to meet the boat and my father dying and out state with Dr. Bradshaw. He told me one morning that my father wasn't coming back.

EM: Were you living in Sebastopol at the time?



FL: Dr. Bradshaw had where...right next door they had a home. Then later on the old Aries were best friends. I would go to the show, my sister would take me to the show this show and would forget to come and get me. I would go to Archie and he would take me in the car and take me home. I was always in love with him. Always. If anyone was alive in Sebastopol they would know all about it.

EM: They probably had several generations beyond the people who knew him. So in 1913 and 1923 and you were oh.

FL: Then we went to Duncans Mills and we bought a hotel. And my mother remarried.

EM: That would be her third husband? What was his name?

FL: Then she remarried.

EM: Who was that? Who did she marry?

FL: A fellow named Jess Copper and he is well known here in Santa Rosa. Well anyway, they went and bought a hotel and bar and of course in those days women didn't go to bars, it was a saloon. If you went you would sit in a little handy room, with the woman.

EM: That was in the '20s. After 1923.

FL: 1919 Dry. 1919 that was the reason why we sold and got out of there. Then my sister married, her husband and my step dad were in the automobile business down in a little town called Manteca

EM: Down in the valley, okay. Let's go back to your days in Sebastopol and talk about the people that you were friends with. Did you go to school in Sebastopol?

FL: I went about a year. And then my father wasn't a Catholic, but he was lineated and he wanted momma to put me in the convent. So I went to Ursalian over there in Santa Rosa.

EM: You mean a real Catholic convent were you learn to trained to be a nun?

FL: Oh no

EM: You mean the school.

FL: The school, the boarder one, I lived there. I lived there until I graduated in 1926. I loved it, the sisters, I wasn't Catholic, but later on became a Catholic.

EM: Yeah, they take uncatholics in Catholic schools.

FL: Are you Catholic?

EM: I am.

FL: I went to Ursalian, and of course being that I didn't have a father I think that I got some extra tenderness because the sisters were so good to me. And I there was only one alive out of all the sisters. From all the sisters.

EM: Oh really, she still alive?

FL: Sister Virginia Asannie. That was her name. She became a nun as Sister Siclia. Now she is retired. And now of course these nuns have it easy, they live in an apartment.

EM: Is this a classmate of yours that became a nun?

FL: Yeah,

EM: Not a teacher

FL: No, they are all gone.

EM: A classmate.

FL: They are all buried up here in Calvary. I go up there once in a while.

EM: I have been up there photographing.

FL: My husband is up there and I'm going to be up there. I hope its soon.



EM: (laughter) you are too lively to be leaving us. What was Sebastopol like when you were there? It must have been a little town.

FL: There was a town that runned up the middle of the street. That where they brought my father when he arrived from Seattle. Docked him in San Francisco and then transferred him to the little Northwestern. And then brought him from Santa Rosa and met him.

EM: Petaluma or Santa Rosa?

FL: There was room at the O'Leary's for the funeral they had a hall.

EM: There had to be so many friends from the community that came to visit.

FL: People came from all over. My sister went Dan Gary he was an old timer here. The son of congressman Gary. She went with him for quite a while. I think we got some special care. You know that I saw him before he died and somebody swore, we were at the party, stop that there is a convent girl here.

EM: This is Mr. Gary saying this?

FL: He wasn't Catholic like the Garys, but he sure had respect for those nuns.

EM: People were a little more careful with their speech in years ago.

FL: Every one of my sister's boyfriends I could have married, I loved them all. And her husband was a doll, he was wonderful.

EM: How did you meet your husband?

FL: I was working as a bookkeeper, and I was working at San Francisco, it was during the depression and he came in looking for a job. I don't know.

EM: So he was a San Francisco person, was he born in San Francisco?

FL: oh no, he was born in Milon, New York. And I still writing to his family. I get letters from his family all the time, we are close.

EM: and this is Duffy Little?

FL: Duffy Joseph Little. Irish...

EM: Great name. Duffy

FL: His family was born in Ireland. My sisters father was born in Ireland too, Jim Murray. But now let me tell you, I told you were the O'Leary's was and Dr. Blackshaw lived right next door.

EM: Now that's on Bodega Ave?

FL: Yeah and then has you go out. There was a Christian Science Church up that way, it was in a house. I think its still in the house. And then you go to farther until you come to the Burbank Experimental gardens and that's where they put the rest home.

EM: Yeah, Burbank Heights Senior housing.

FL: My father and Luther Burbank were very close. They had gone to school together. When we bought the ranch he came out there and planted trees we two fruits and one tree and he just did everything for my dad.

EM: Where was the ranch?

FL: Route 4 box 32. You go pass the Experimental ground, you come to the cemetery and then you go pass that until you come to the second hill. Then the Barbers lived over there and went on a little farther and our ranch is to the left.

EM: Sort of the gold ridge area? There's a gold ridge, water touch road.

FL: The next place down was the Horgos. You have heard of the Horgos? Maryanne Horgos she is died now. You will have to tell you the story of them.



EM: Let's talk about..have we covered your family? Luther Burbank, your family knew Luther Burbank.

FL: and congressman Gary.

EM: Near Santa Rosa

FL: And Jack London. Jack London stayed at our mine.

EM: Your mine in up in Alaska?

FL: Yes, He came up there on a trip and stayed at the mine. And my dad knew all those people, Robert W. Surpuss. We were all friends, and they came to Alaska and stayed with us. In our house was always opened to everybody, and we would sit down and eat.

EM: It was a small community and you get to know everybody I get to imagine.

FL: My father went to the old horse man, I think it was the old horse man school in San Francisco. And then when he was 18 or 19 he went to the Sierras looking for gold. Until the gold rush in Nome. Then he went to Nome. You know, many years later my husband was always doing anything that I wanted and I said that I wanted to go up there where my dad was in Pine Crest. So we went to the essay office and they told us this man, Mr. Jamish, he was still alive and he was on the right hand side of the road going to Headiche, or Pine Crest and he said I can't tell you want place, but you will find it. We went along and stopped at every place and my husband got out would ask everybody are you Mr. Jamish, No, no, no. The next place we went to he hit one of those Hollywood doors, you know half opened, this man was sitting there looking out and was going like this and I said Mr. Jamish he said "Yes" and I said "you don't know me but did you ever know a man by the name of Frank Grimm." He was my boyhood cham. And I said crying and my husband jumped out and he said come in and we went in, he told me all about my father. How he would make skates for all the girls. I believed that. He made a heart on everyone. And I said that was my dad, he knew him. We corresponded for a long time, he is died now. His wife, he married a younger woman and her and I corresponded and she is died now. They are all died. No body is alive. The only people are alive are the Wilson's. Some of them, but I called up there one time and Darrell was still alive and then he died and I don't know who was there and she is Japanese and she said that her name is Wilson. I called up three or four times.

EM: I don't know that name.

FL: I don't know them either.

EM: Well, can you tell me something about the O'Leary family? We have to talk about the families.

FL: The who?

EM: O'Leary family.

FL: The old man had a stack hat, what do they call those big hats that go up

EM: stock piped?

FL: Stock piped, my father said before he died, if anything happens to me for god sake, give my body to the O'Leary, he is always following me around. He wasn't. But he thought he was. Of course he had the body. Archie and I became quite close. I loved Archie and then he go out and pick up a body ... and came back and come in for coffee. One time his dad called up and he said, is Archie there, momma said yes, he was just going to leave. And she will send him back there because he got that body in the back of the car. And they are here to pick up the casket.



EM: Did Archie's father conduct? Was that Edward O'Leary that was Archie's father?  
FL: No, well yes, I guess his name was Edward. I never knew his name. Edward was the father, then Archie, and then Owen. He was the nerd of well  
EM: Owen was?  
FL: yes, he was a drunk. I loved him though, they were all wonderful.  
EM: What happened to him? Was he in the under taking business?  
FL: He was buried up there.  
EM: Was he in the under taking business with Archie?  
FL: oh, no. They couldn't trust him.  
EM: oh okay.  
FL: He would take the money and get drunk. He was quite a drinker. Tommy Worth was another one, he was a nerd of well.  
EM: Oh that Tom Worth, he conducted the drug store. He had a drug store, didn't he?  
FL: Tom Worth the father. And they had married to a woman from Petaluma. I didn't know her name. When you came and she saw you, "Oh my baby doll, how are you?" to everybody. She loved every body. She had a soda fountain in front, of the drug store, and I used to go in there and treat all my kids. I never knew what paying was, I used to say, "charge it, charge it."  
EM: Well, then you had to pay the sometime.  
FL: Well, my mother did. I didn't know.  
EM: So this was when you were a school child.  
FL: Yeah, charge it,  
EM: treated every body, free soda on the house.  
FL: Yeah, that's right. So anyways, Mr. Worth  
FL: Was there a Mr. Worth Senior, a Tom Senior? And a Tom Junior.  
EM: Senior, there wasn't a Tom Junior. Yeah, it was Tom Junior. I never called, I never referred to Junior.  
EM: He was just referred to has Tom?  
FL: Is that thing on?  
EM: Yeah, you don't want it recorded.  
FL: I don't.  
EM: They aren't here anymore.  
FL: no, no I don't want to tell anything that would hurt the family name.  
EM: No, no, of course not.  
FL: Mr. Worth I guess he served a little time for performing abortion during the first world war.  
EM: Oh really?  
FL: And, anyway, we knew him and he was out. Mrs. Worth, you would loved him, everyone was welcomed, I stayed with them two or three times when my mother went to the city and she didn't want to take me and I would stay with them. They had a lovely home. Near Peez, Peez had a home up there too.  
EM: I know where that is house is  
FL: Maryanne Peez, I knew her quite well. She was at my birthday party one time, her and the Donner's. They were an old family up there. He was relatives of the Donner's. Margie



Donner is still alive, her name is Condozes. Unless she is died, but I would think it would be in the paper.

EM: I'm trying to think if I have seen her at the ceremony record because that's the next book I'm working on.

FL: Her name was Margie and she had a brother George, they were twins.

EM: Twins, I was reading them in the newspaper when I was doing research. I really don't know, I don't know if she is alive or not.

FL: I think she is still alive. But Lane, that is a brother, an older brother, he is died. The sister is died.

EM: This is the Donner family?

FL: The Donner.

EM: Lane Donner?

FL: The names weren't big, Lane. Who would have heard of that now?

EM: Well, take it from a family name. Or something.

FL: They lived in, I have a little picture here, I will try to draw but I'm not very good at drawing.

EM: Make me a map, oh great.

FL: Here is Sebastopol, the Main Street, here, I don't have enough space, here is Burbank experimental garden, here was the ceremony and then Frank Silva? You went around a little curve and Frank Silva, Frank Silva's home was...they lived there. Then McMannis's, and we lived there. On this side, here is the main street, here is Roy Crawford's grocery store and Peez drug store. Then on this side is ...drug store and Bourba the show was up there a little bit, Starlite,

EM: The movie theatre

FL: yeah

EM: Starlite

FL: They had a child, it chose to sit in the window, she used to bring it down, and its tongue was out all the time. It evidentially, retarded.

EM: This is the Huntley's. Huntley's used to own the theatre.

FL: I don't remember

EM: Albert Huntley's

FL: But anyway, the first time we had gone down there, I used to go out to the show all the time. The kid was sticking its tongue out, and I thought it was making, so I stuck my tongue back, and my sister jabbed, and never do that. You know how kids are. Then here is Water trough hill, that's where the Bourba's lived over this way and the Lachee's, then up hill was the Yeahger family. And then

EM: The Crawsby?

FL: Crawsby, oh yeah, Millard and Nina Crawsby and the mother. They lived right there. I remember once my mother took clothes down to them. They were kind of hard up. Then the Wilson's and the Powers. We were right across the street. Then Spring hill School, that's not there any more. The principle used to be man be Fellows and then Mrs. Downy took over. And then Juliete Todd was the teacher. I went there one year. This Julieta Todd she boarded with the MacMannis's and they had one of the lights that come down the middle living room table and we sit around there studying. The Bellatine family lived back there. The ranch



went back so many feet, I don't know. The Belllatine ranch a jointed. This up here goes to first stone. And then

EM: Burnette. Frank and somebody and son? It looks like An, Amos, Frank?

FL: The Burnette's lived there. And I don't know what I wrote up there. Frank and Anna Burnette and the son. The son became deputy sheriff over here in Santa Rosa. He was the son, He was the son of the priest, I will tell you later. And after the priest left this neighborhood, they found out about it and sent him away. She got a terrific case of ... The undertakers you know. One time she called my mother at seven o'clock in the morning and said take the eight o'clock train. My mother said I can't do it, she said then take the cab come all the way up here and my mother didn't know what it was all about and she took me with her. It was Dan Laba? Funeral. She wanted somebody there she could lean onto. She had the most wonderful husband, but I think he was, I don't think he could have child. So she had that boy. And he died later. And he became deputy sheriff here in Santa Rosa. I often think what if that child needed a blood transfusion, what would he do?

EM: You get someone's else blood that was the same type, but not in the family. You were talking about the McMannis, who were they?

FL: They had came up here, and listen at that time that we moved up here Mrs. Wilson, she was like this. She always was sick, always, had a pain here had a pain there. The McMannis moved up here, and She was a Christian Science, and momma told her about Mrs. Wilson and she got a hold of Mrs. Wilson. And I'm telling you she cured all her illness. Then her husband was sick when they moved up here. They were sort of semi retired and bought a little ranch and then Helen began a teacher. And then Catherine, and Edward became the dentist here in Santa Rosa he married an interior decorator, a lady, he died a few years back. They are all died in that family. Anyway, I used to go there and stay all night with the kids. That house was really nice, I forgot the people who owned up before. They were all Methodist in Sebastopol when we moved out there. I drunk. I don't mean, I but my folks drunk, and we would have parties. My father would invite people and everything, we would have big parties and everything, of course, it was against

EM: No one would drink.

FL: yeah, especially those Methodist. Ohhhh.

EM: They were strict. There was a St. Sebastian Church Catholic church that established pretty early. There must have been some Catholics, Portuguese family were Catholic.

FL: One time that priest, Father Sisna, I'm getting damned tired that no one is going to church but the...Portuguese. He got put out of there. Then they got some other priest in there. But that was the truth there was nothing but the Italians.

EM: Do you want to tell me about some other families that you knew? Who were you good friends with?

FL: I knew the Hundles.

EM: The Hundles, yeah.

FL: Marianne Hundles. Of course they were Methodist too, they didn't have anything with people who drink. Oh, I have to tell you something that is funny. After my father died, they bought food to the house, you know, because my mother had his people come up from San Francisco. Well, she asked every body if anyone would like a drink. Well, Mrs. Hundles said, what can you make? My mother said I can make anything I used tend bars in the old



country. That's an expression. You know she told everyone that my mother had tend bar in the old country. My mother had never been to the old country. (Laughter)

EM: She took her literally.

FL: My mother was glad to get out of there.

EM: There was Marianne, now there was

FL: She was head of the grand jury over here, Marianne Hundle.

EM: Did she marry a Bourbo?

FL: yes, yes

EM: What was the name of her parents?

FL: Hundle

EM: because they were Hundle, do you remember the first name?

FL: It was William Hundle, Marianne Hundle was the one child, there was one child, when she married Bourbo, she had a couple three kids. Then he is married again.

EM: I thought that they were ranchers, and ...

FL: I went over there to see them once, because there son, they had a son, and he was working on some property where they had a garage sale. And I stopped at the garage sale and I said how is your mother, I knew her years ago. He said, You gotta go see her, you gotta go see her. So I went to Hundle place, and she took me inside, but she didn't remember me, I think she was a couple younger than I, but Bourba she sent him out to the garage and didn't introduce him or anything like she was ashamed of him or something. But she was a strong Methodist.

EM: This would have been her son in law? Mr. Bourba.

FL: He turned around, and now he is married again and they have two children, one boy I met, the other one is in a foreign country. I don't know what, doing something, she talked about him. She just had two boys. The one of the boys I don't think he ever married and lives up at the home now. He is a nice kid. Kid. (laughter)

EM: He is probably sixty or seventy now. When did your husband died? Was it many many years ago?

FL: '72

EM: 1972?

FL: He died January 31, 1972. He had a couple of heart operations. We were sitting and talking and I was sitting over there, and he was sitting here with his two dogs, and he said, what are you stuck on? I was doing a crossword puzzle, and I said I will give it to you in a minute. With that he said "ugh" and he went right out. It was good for him but tough for me. I didn't know a soul up here. I wanted to go to the hospital because I thought they could do that, and bring him back because. Anyway, Dr. Norman he bought me home and he went next door and asked if the people could stay all night with me until I got someone here that I knew.

EM: Were you living here?

FL: Oh no,

EM: Or Somewhere else?

FL: I just moved here a couple years.

EM: In Santa Rosa, yeah.

FL: We were lived at 1076 Cark, don't look at the place now. Oh, its, some sporty girls had bought it, and you should see it. They cut it all up and all and its just terrible.



EM: Sometimes you don't want to go back to old houses.

FL: I stay off that street. When I drive down over I go down Farmers Lane so I don't hit it because I can't stand to look at it. Because we had it beautiful.

EM: Let's see we have talked about a lot of things. Do you want to talk anything you knew?

FL: Well, wait a minute, wait a minute. This is pretty... The doctor came four o'clock in the morning after Jessie. He said that flu, what's you to come and send all the kids home, but you can't. After I got over the flu, my folks had that hotel over there in Duncan Mills, I went over there to recuperate, it was over summer vacation anyways. But I was going to tell you something else, I'm slipping.

EM: Let's see we were talking about the flu, and the ranch, catching things as a child, you go all these childhood diseases. Was it something to do with that?

FL: Oh, there my mother went over to get Rose Donner, we had to get a nurse. Two sisters came down with it and another girl so momma went over to Sebastopol to see about a nurse. She thought of Rose Donner because I liked her. She went to the front steps and there were four bodies.

EM: At Rose Donner's house? Because she was nursing other people?

FL: No, because the whole Donner family had died of the flu epidictic, so Momma didn't even ask, she left.

EM: That was around that time?

FL: That was around 1919.

EM: Yeah, lots and lots of people dying of the flu, it was terrible.

FL: Yes, left and right. And see, I got it first, and then Sister Antonio and Sister Anges both came down with it. I keep asking my mother because my mother took care of. You know that sisters used to get two hours off in the afternoon. They worked twelve hours and get two hours off, my mother would take the shift, the two hours, and I would say did she have any hair? I wanted to know about the munch(?) You know how kids are?

EM: This was the convent that was nursing you?

FL: Yeah, we were all were all in the same room.

EM: They kept you at the school?

FL: Oh yeah, because there was no place to take me. They fixed an old used to be the laundry rooms of the school before the earthquake. Then it was disbanded and they built the new school but they took it and fumigated it and put me down there.

EM: Where was Ursine?

FL: Tenth and B

EM: Tenth and B street in Santa Rosa? Okay, they probably moved.

FL: It was beautiful, its not as nice up there. I'm not up there much, its like what it used to be. Even the furniture, they still have the antiques, but they, there is something gone. I went there a love to and I love it. I went to school with a lot of prominent. Madeline Barnasn, Judge Barnasn daughter.

EM: Did you had another Sebastopol girls that came over.

FL: We only stayed in Sebastopol until 19, just before it went dry. My mother and my step dad bought this old hotel in Duncans Mills, and when it went dry there wasn't any reason to be up there. So they went back to Sebastopol and stayed about a year, and then they left there and went to san Francisco. But um, I liked Sebastopol, it was a nice little town in those days.



EM: It must have been pretty, do you remember what the population was, how many people lived in the city?

FL: I don't remember that. But I remember of course ... because they had ice cream. Peez did too, but they were kind snotty. I think Marianne was too. She said that she was going to come and see me, but that was a long time ago, I didn't hear from her. But if you ever see the papers in Sebastopol around October of 1916, you can see all about my dad and about my mother. The papers were just full of it. Hewlett Scholer was at the bank. And then he married Helen Newton. Helen Newton, I went to school with her and she about a grade a head of me. She was from Valley Ford. Did you know them? Did you know Hewlett Scholer? I guess they are all died now.

EM: No, I guess they are all long gone before I arrived.

FL: Geez whiz, how old are you?

EM: 55

FL: Oh god, you're a baby

EM: I'm a baby

FL: Compared to me, 87, and you know that my mother died at 61 and my father at 51 and my sister did lived until 80 and my brother 47 and he died to day the golden gate was opened in Alaska. So you see, I'm really antique.

EM: How was it walking? How did you get down to the bridge, did you drive down in cars?

FL: No, we drove down the marina and walked across the bridge.

EM: In San Francisco Marina?

FL: San Francisco.

EM: So you walked from San Francisco to Marin

FL: and back

EM: and back, I see, okay.

FL: Then we waited for the parade that night

EM: Some people had to drive across and back.

FL: I don't think ours was the first day, the first day was for pedestrians days. Because I have the coupons, I mean those things. Gayla wanted those and I wouldn't give them to her.

EM: I would like to see those if you have them around.

FL: I don't think they are far.